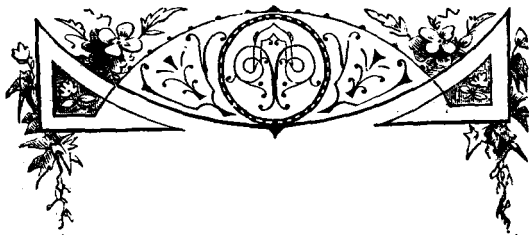




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ON WHICH SIDE ?

WHEN political or other parties strive with each other, it may often be wise to say, "I will be neutral; I will not take either side." But in a far more important case than any connected with worldly contests such a course is impossible. None can be neutral where God and the Saviour are concerned. All who are not the decided friends of Christ are considered by him decided foes; for he has said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Matt. xii, 30. From the word of God, which

cannot err or deceive, we learn that all intelligent beings are divided into two classes, the holy and the unholy. Thus in the unseen world of glory there are holy and lovely beings—the blessed God, his mighty angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect, who “have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Rev. vii, 14. In the unseen abodes of sin and woe there are the devil and his angels, and the lost and miserable spirits of sinful men, reserved for final condemnation; who in their character and dispositions are hateful, and hating one another. Jude 6. In this world a like difference also exists, though the line of division is not equally clear to us. One part of the human race belongs to the family of God—they are his saints, his children, the lovers and followers of the Lord Jesus: the other part is in subjection to Satan, “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience,” and described as “dead in trespasses and sins.” Eph. ii, 1, 2.

To one or the other of these classes every dweller in this world belongs, whether young or aged, rich or poor, learned or unlearned. There is no middle class. No one can truly say, I will not be of either party. God has decided that there shall be no neutrality, and in various ways bears testimony to this solemn and momentous fact. Are men described as travelers through the world? Then there are but two ways in which they go: "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat;" because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Matt. vii, 13, 14. Is the world compared to a field? Then in that field grow two kinds, the wheat and the tares: "The good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one." Matt. xiii, 38. Are plain and direct statements used? Then the testimony is, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son

shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John iii, 36. Are the characters and conditions of these two classes further described by their fruits? Then we read, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God." 1 John iii, 10. Are all that ever have lived, or ever shall live, presented to our view as appearing before the eternal Judge? Then we read of the sheep and the goats, the righteous and the unrighteous; those at his right hand, and those at his left—these going away into everlasting punishment, and those into everlasting life. Matt. xxv, 31-46. Thus, with much variety of representation and language, is the weighty truth declared, that on earth there are but two classes—the servants of God, and the slaves of the wicked one; the heirs of the kingdom of heaven, and the heirs of hell. Reader, you do, and you must, belong to one of these classes. Under such circumstances, how needful is the inquiry, "Who is on the Lord's side?"

To be on the Lord's side is to be blessed now, and the heir of endless blessedness hereafter. A young woman, well educated, of good talents, and whose company was earnestly sought by the gay and thoughtless, was led by the Holy Spirit to see that her course of worldly gayety, if persisted in, would end in everlasting sorrow. By God's grace she sought salvation, and obtained the peace of God through believing. She experienced much happiness—indeed, a joy “unspeakable and full of glory.” 1 Pet. i, 8. Several of her young friends came to visit her, and inquired if she had lost her reason. She meekly replied that she never possessed it more, but that her mind was turned from vanity to real and substantial happiness. She said that if she could at once enjoy all the happiness she had ever before possessed, one hour of her present joy would far surpass it all. “And now,” she added, “I do not want to part with you, although I cannot join you in our former vain amusements. I do entreat you to join me

in walking the narrow road to happiness." At first they tried to quench her religious feelings, and made light of all she said; but He who led her to happiness so powerfully impressed her affectionate addresses upon some of their hearts that they became her happy companions in the way to the kingdom of heaven. At the close of a short but pious course she left the world with sweet composure, saying, "My heavenly Father, receive thy poor child home. O precious Saviour, into thy hands I commit my spirit!"

Happy are they who are on the Lord's side; the difference in their state and condition from that of all mankind besides is immensely great. In the view of men, the difference may seem small between an estimable moral person, who neglects the Saviour, and a humble watchful believer—between an amiable girl who trifles about her soul, and another as amiable who loves and trusts her Lord—between a respectable tradesman who scorns whatever is mean, and another acting in the same way because

renewed by the Holy Ghost. But, while "man looketh on the outward appearance, the Lord looketh on the heart," and he sees an immense difference there; and equally great is the difference in their state. In all that is most important they are as far apart as the east is from the west.

Those who are on the Lord's side have all their sins forgiven; they are justified from all things, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth them from all sin. Acts xiii, 39; 1 John i, 7. Being justified by faith, they have peace with God; are blessed and accepted in the Beloved. Rom. v, 1; iv, 7; Eph. i, 6. Those who are not the Lord's neglect the great salvation; not one of their sins is forgiven, but the wrath of God abideth on them. Heb. ii, 3; Luke xiv, 24; John iii, 36. Abroad, at home, by day, by night, they lie under the curse of God's broken law.

They who are on the Lord's side are born of God. The Holy Ghost is their Teacher, Comforter, and Helper. Others reject all this good, and resist the Holy Ghost.

The world of glory is the home of those who are on the Lord's side, and time is daily bringing them nearer to their home, and death will be to them a happy entrance on eternal life. But—dreadful contrast!—the fire of hell awaits those who belong not to God; every moment that passes brings nearer the dreaded hour of entering there. At length they die: no Saviour welcomes them; they lift up their eyes in misery, and are lost forever.

To sum up all: they who are on the Lord's side are exposed to no curse, but are possessors or heirs of all the blessings. But those who are not his have not one blessing, but are exposed to many dreadful curses. On them rests the curse of the broken law, and the anathema of the neglected Gospel. 1 Cor. xvi, 22.

Is such the difference between these two classes? Then how important the question to every reader, "**WHO IS ON THE LORD'S SIDE ?**"